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WEEKLY REPORT



THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

20 October 1965

INTELLIGENCE AND REPORTING SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE INTERAGENCY
VIETNAM COORDINATING COMMITTEE

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THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM
(14 October - 20 October 1965)

C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
THE WEEK IN PERSPECTIVE	iii
Map, South Vietnam, facing page	1
I. THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM	1
A. POLITICAL SITUATION	1
Ripples of dissatisfaction appear to pose no serious threat to the government (p. 1); Student press conference points up Ky's failure to develop rapport with youth (p. 1); Saigon students denounce US student protests (p. 1); Buddhist leader Quang is annoyed but intends no action (p. 2); Civilian political maneuvering evokes little interest (p. 2); Labor union fears government harassment (p. 3); Ky inaugurates fireside chats (p. 3); VC strike appeal fizzles (p. 4); Rubber plantation closed by VC demands (p. 4).	
B. MILITARY SITUATION	5
Viet Cong activity lacks aggressiveness but incidents increase (p. 5); IV Corps area is scene of greatest activity (p. 6); Various allied operations fail to make significant enemy contact (p. 6); Many lines of communication remain closed (p. 7).	

-i-

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C. RURAL CONSTRUCTION

8

Rural Construction secretary feels various cadres must be merged (p. 8); His views on revitalizing the pacification program are detailed (p. 8); Progress in Chieu Hoi re-training program (p. 8); Australia offers assistance (p. 8); Number of returnees shows an increase, mainly civilian (p. 9).

Map, North Vietnam, facing page

10

II. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BLOC

10

Three new SAM sites are discovered and one is attacked (p. 10); Hungarian party delegation concludes Hanoi visit with routine communiqué (p. 10); North Vietnamese National Assembly meeting is postponed (p. 10); Hanoi's propaganda exults over Vietnam policy protests in the US (p. 11).

III. THIRD COUNTRY DEVELOPMENTS

12

Cambodia denounces misdirected airstrike (p. 12); ICRC delegates in Saigon complain about restrictions (p. 12); GVN reiterates conditions for peace (p. 12); GVN plans to establish permanent mission in Geneva (p. 12); GVN and GRC representatives hold economic conference (p. 13); Spain to donate four ambulances (p. 13).

ANNEX: South Vietnam Battle Statistics (Weekly)
US Combat Casualty Figures in Vietnam
(Weekly)

(The Weekly Report on the Situation in South Vietnam is based on contributions from CIA, DIA, and INR; it is edited and published by CIA without final coordination.)

THE WEEK IN PERSPECTIVE

The surface calm of the South Vietnamese political situation was ruffled during the past week only by public complaints of the Saigon Students Union over alleged slights from the Ky government, and by further mumblings of dissatisfaction in both Buddhist and labor circles. Although there continue to be no indications of any serious threat to the government, these criticisms do serve to point up Premier Ky's difficulties in generating positive support for his regime even though the populace increasingly appears to be ruling out a Viet Cong military victory.

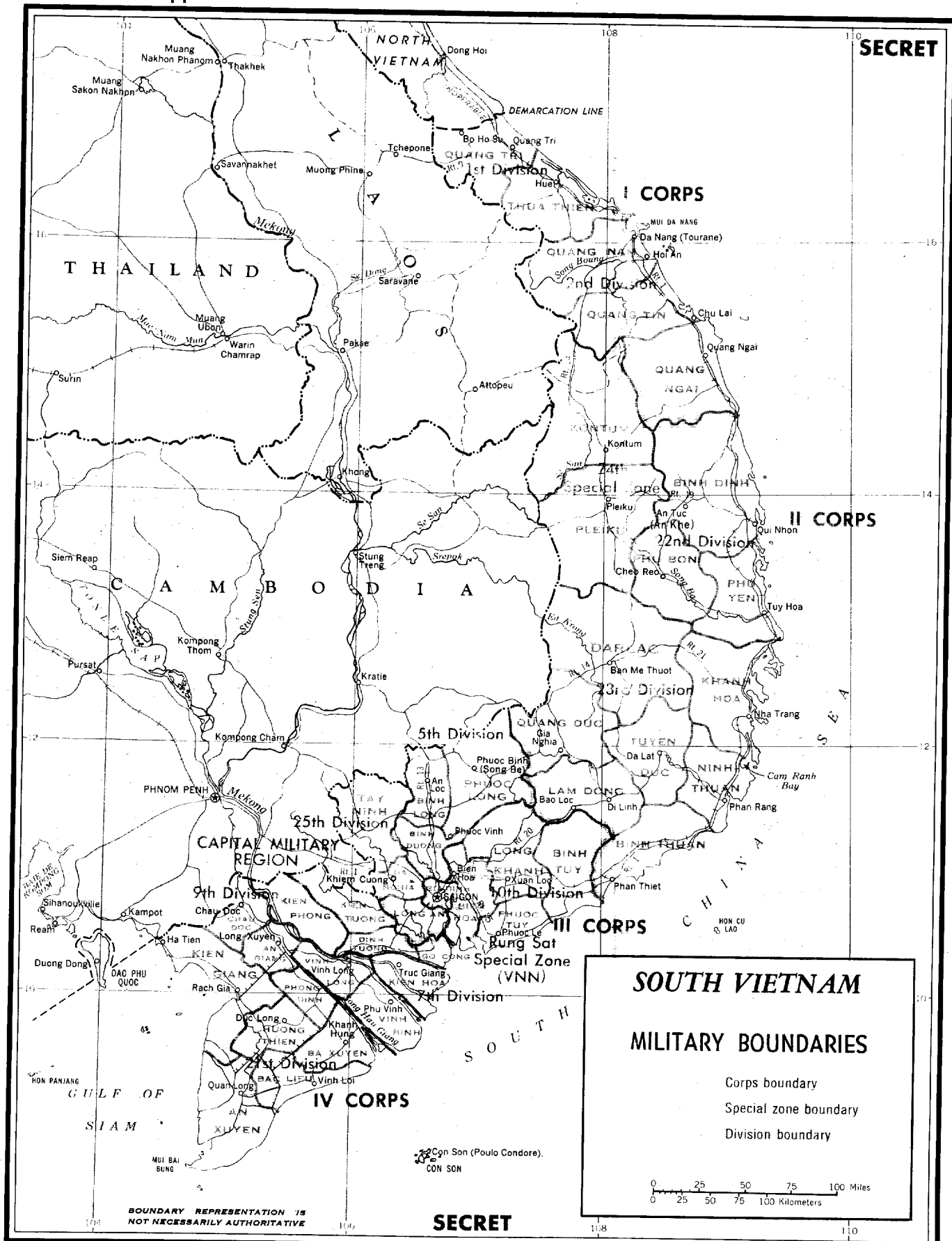
Ky, meanwhile, has inaugurated a series of "fireside chats," addressing himself specifically to such problems as war benefits, war dislocations, and rising prices, all of which have been occupying greater public attention. Reports on the recent government-sponsored conference of provincial officials indicate that it portended no major breakthrough, but that it served to endorse the planning concepts of the new secretary of rural construction.

The almost complete lack of public response to the Viet Cong appeal for a one-hour strike in cities and towns on 15 October, the opening day of a month-long Liberation Front "hate America" campaign, sharply demonstrated the weakness of the Communists in urban areas. In the military sphere, the Viet Cong are sustaining a high rate of guerrilla activity throughout the country, while generally avoiding large-scale engagements with government and allied troops.

The Communists, however, continue to conduct isolated attacks in battalion strength against targets of opportunity. They retain the capability to harass military installations and populated towns, although they appear at present to be concentrating on obtaining rice supplies from harvesting in the northern provinces and on securing corridors connecting their base areas in the southern part of the country. US and South Vietnamese troops, meanwhile, are keeping up pressure through aggressive search-and-destroy operations, and may have temporarily weakened Viet Cong units north of Saigon where substantial guerrilla supplies have been captured or destroyed.

-iii-

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I. THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

A. POLITICAL SITUATION

1. Ripples of dissatisfaction on the part of students, Buddhists, and professional politicians continued during the past week to disturb the surface political calm, but appeared to pose no serious threat to the Ky government. A US Embassy assessment of the Ky government's position at the present time concludes that the military regime is not yet attracting any appreciable degree of enthusiasm on the part of South Vietnam's principal political, social or religious groups. On the other hand, most of these segments appear willing to live with the regime for the time being. Moreover, despite the lack of positive support for the government in Saigon, there appears to be a marked increase in public confidence that the Viet Cong will not win South Vietnam through a military victory.

2. Premier Ky's failure so far to develop a vanguard youth organization through which real momentum could be given to his social and economic reforms was pointed up at a Saigon students' press conference on 19 October. Leaders of the Saigon Students Union (SSU) openly accused the government of withholding financial support from their organization and of bypassing it with regard to certain student programs, including the summer youth project and the sending of student delegations to the US and South Korea. Singled out for criticism were two cabinet members and a private American consultant alleged to have usurped the students' authority.

3. Although the SSU press conference also aired some criticism of inflationary pressures caused by the increase in US ground forces, the Saigon student leaders, unlike their counterparts in Hue, made a point of stressing their appreciation for US assistance in combatting Communist aggression from North Vietnam. They strongly denounced recent student protests in the US against American policy in Vietnam. Meanwhile, the continued carping of militant Hue students against I Corps commander General Thi and

against the danger of an expanded US presence in Vietnam has drawn an army warning. Leaflets, signed by "soldiers of I Corps" and reportedly authorized by General Thi, were disseminated last week in Hue. The leaflets attacked specific Hue students and professors for ridiculing the armed forces, sowing dissension between allies, and aiding Communism and neutralism.

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4. [] report increased annoyance on the part of Thich Tri Quang, spokesman of the militant Buddhists of central Vietnam, as a result of recent government actions. These actions include the appointment of Catholic generals to key military positions, alleged government favoritism toward a minority Buddhist organization, and the release of certain political prisoners, including the former Saigon police chief who had led the Diem regime's raid on Buddhist pagodas in 1963. Quang, however, was quoted as saying that unless conditions seriously worsened, he intended to take no action against the government and felt that Ky should be permitted another six months to prove himself. There were also reports of similar criticisms on the part of Thich Tam Chau, chairman of the Buddhist Institute in Saigon, who has so far maintained good relations with the military regime.

5. A probable restraining factor in the Buddhist attitude toward the government is the upcoming December conference of the Unified Buddhist Association (UBA), at which elections for key UPA offices will be held. Despite rivalries between Quang's central faction, Chau's northern faction, and a southern faction that currently is lukewarm in its support for the UBA, Buddhist leaders seem particularly anxious to avoid issues that might increase internal dissension and further weaken the association.

6. Civilian maneuvering for a greater voice in the nation's political direction was apparent at a government-sponsored meeting on 11-12 October of province chiefs and representatives of elected provincial councils. Despite government efforts to limit the conference agenda to agreed topics of administration, pacification, and refugee problems, two prominent politicians--Dr. Phan Quang Dan and Hoang Co Binh, both members of the elected councils--sought to use the occasion to press for a representative national assembly. They failed to have this

issue brought before the conference, however, and their convening of a separate meeting of council representatives, which resulted in a petition calling for an interim assembly and for preparation of national elections, evoked little public interest.

7. A police search last week of the home of an officer of South Vietnam's leading trade union, the Confederation of Vietnamese Labor (CVT), has revived CVT fears of government harassment. Although some CVT leaders are still urging the union to launch a general strike to protest the government's alleged discriminatory policies toward the union, the top CVT leadership apparently feels the union is too weak to risk outright provocations. Reportedly, the CVT, which is eager to play a major role in organizing the peasantry under the government's rural construction effort, is seeking allies for its cause among the Catholics, the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects, and southern-oriented political circles. There are additional reports of at least two factions--one involving ousted military officers--seeking support among these same circles for a coup attempt. However, there appears to be no widespread sentiment for overthrow of the Ky government, and a considerable fear of ushering in a less favorable successor. Recent reports suggest, for example, that Catholic circles, while not actively endorsing Ky, are beginning to regard him as a potentially popular leader.

8. Ky, on 16 October, inaugurated the first of what appears to be a planned series of radio "fire-side chats" to the Vietnamese public. Unlike some of the more philosophical lectures of several of his predecessors who have attempted to exploit this device, Ky addressed himself to specific problems troubling wide segments of the populace, notably the failure to receive military allowances, dislocation of housing near US military bases and in the vicinity of a bridge under construction near Saigon, and the rising cost of living. Ky promised firm measures to alleviate these hardships, plus stern action against any officials contributing to economic hardship. He placed the blame for recent shortages and price increases on the Viet Cong and dishonest speculators.

9. The Viet Cong appeal for a general strike in the cities on 15 October to open its "hate America month," given wide advance propaganda over its clandestine "Liberation Radio," resulted in almost total failure. In Saigon, particularly during the morning hour specifically set aside for the strike, shops and streets remained crowded and business was conducted as usual. Only a few scattered Viet Cong leaflets appeared in Saigon, and one unsuccessful grenade incident was reported. Traffic was generally light on roads entering the capital, but largely because of recent road sabotage. Other major towns reported no disruptions.

10. The motive for the Viet Cong appeal, which provided a dramatic illustration of Communist weakness in the country's populated centers, is unclear. Subsequent Liberation Front radio propaganda on the success of the appeal could hardly prove comforting to Viet Cong troops or sympathizers in isolated rural areas. Trumpeting the "numerous banners and leaflets" that appeared in Saigon on 15 October, a Front broadcast on 19 October cited as examples of the appeal's success that "many people refrained from going into the streets and to the market," that many households lit wood and incense to commemorate an executed Viet Cong hero and that old people told their children about him, that children and other people stared at Americans in the street and "turned their heads" away, that some factory workers observed ten minutes of silence, and that "almost all taxis" refused to transport passengers during the appointed hour of the strike.

Economic Situation

11. An officer of the Michelin plantations has decided to suspend operations at the company's Dautieng rubber plantation in Binh Duong Province because of recent Viet Cong demands. Michelin officials state that the Viet Cong are demanding that direct taxes be paid on each bale of rubber and that the company accept all demands made by workers and take no personnel actions without Viet Cong approval. Michelin apparently has cut off essential supplies to Dautieng, including rice, and feels that this action will force the Viet Cong to come to terms. At the same time, Michelin is reopening a plantation that was abandoned during the Dong Xoai battle in June.

B. MILITARY SITUATION

1. During the past week, Viet Cong activity was marked by a general lack of military aggressiveness although guerrilla-type actions, including ambushes of friendly forces, continued. Despite the presence of large Viet Cong forces in II and III Corps areas, these units continued to avoid contact with friendly operations. The Viet Cong strength in these two corps areas remains a threat to allied military installations and population centers.

2. For the third straight week Viet Cong - initiated incidents increased, but their intensity dropped sharply from last week. Only four Viet Cong attacks were reported, compared to last week's total of 12. Large-scale friendly operations undoubtedly contributed to the decrease in intensity. Of all incidents, 35 percent occurred in the IV Corps, with 22 percent in III, 20 percent in II, and 19 percent in I Corps. There were 34 incidents in the Capital Military Region, one more than last week.

Viet Cong - Initiated Activities

3. During the period 10-16 October, only one attack was reported in I Corps area. Other Viet Cong activity involved harassing mortar fire and railroad sabotage. The Viet Cong appeared to be off-balance and on the defensive in I Corps because of aggressive patrolling by friendly forces. This aggressiveness, coupled with the current Viet Cong involvement in the rice harvest, may have accounted for the lack of large-scale activity. On 20 October, however, a Viet Cong force of at least a battalion attacked an outpost in central Quang Tri Province, possibly foreshadowing renewed Viet Cong initiatives in the I CTZ.

4. Since 4 October when there were battalion-size attacks in Binh Dinh and Quang Duc provinces, no attacks were reported in II Corps until 19 October when the Plei Me CIDG camp 25 miles south of Pleiku was attacked by a possible battalion-size Viet Cong force. Viet Cong activity was limited to mining, sabotage, harassing fire, and terrorism. Although friendly search-and-destroy operations conducted in Binh Dinh Province failed to make significant contact, stronger Viet Cong resistance can be expected

as friendly operations move northward into Viet Cong - controlled rice-producing areas.

5. Incidents in the III Corps continued at a low level. During friendly search-and-destroy operations in Binh Duong Province, 310 tons of rice were captured. The loss of large quantities of food, salt, and other essentials, coupled with destruction of facilities in former Viet Cong safe havens, may have temporarily weakened the enemy offensive capability in this province.

6. In the IV Corps area, the level of Viet Cong - initiated incidents increased over the high level reported during the past two weeks, but no large-scale Viet Cong actions were reported. The primary Viet Cong objective continues to be the maintenance of control over the communications/liaison corridor connecting Kien Hoa Province to War Zone C in Tay Ninh Province, as evidenced by the increased number of incidents in Kien Hoa and adjacent provinces.

GVN/Allied Activities

7. Airstrikes and aggressive search-and-destroy operations characterized GVN/allied forces military activity during the past week. The II and IV Corps were the most active combat areas. A large-scale combined operation in Binh Dinh Province, II Corps, following a B-52 Stratofortress strike, was planned to trap remnants of the Viet Cong force encountered during the past month along National Route 1 near Phu My. Elements of the US 1st Cavalry Division and the ARVN 22d Division converged on the area, but only light contact was made with scattered Viet Cong forces during the four-day operation. Numerous Viet Cong installations and large quantities of foodstuffs were destroyed. Friendly forces lost seven killed and 56 wounded. Viet Cong losses were 29 killed, 27 captured, and 68 suspects detained. During the week, approximately 2,600 tons of supplies were moved from Qui Nhon to Pleiku over Route 19 while US-GVN forces secured the highway.

8. A GVN search-and-destroy operation in Phong Dinh Province, IV Corps, resulted in heavy friendly casualties when a ranger battalion, after driving the Viet Cong from an occupied Viet Cong hamlet, failed to

organize for defense or to establish proper night security. The Viet Cong, disguised as a friendly relief force, quickly overran the position, killing the wounded local security personnel and the acting battalion commander. Friendly losses were 65 killed, 63 wounded, and two missing. The Viet Cong lost 170 killed and seven captured.

9. Friendly forces conducted fewer battalion-size operations this week but remained in the field longer. III MAF units continued to protect the rice harvesting in their areas by intensive patrolling and security operations. The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, provided security in its areas of responsibility for Route 19 and for the advance party of the ROK division. Another brigade of the US 1st Infantry Division arrived at the end of the week, as the division began the occupation of base areas north of Saigon with little Viet Cong resistance. The 173d Airborne Brigade lost eight killed and 49 wounded during an operation following a B-52 Stratofortress strike in the An Son secret base area near Ben Cat, Binh Duong Province. Most of the casualties resulted from sniper fire and booby traps.

10. National Route 1 is closed in Quang Ngai, Binh Thuan, Binh Tuy, and Hau Nghia provinces. Route 9 is closed in Quang Tri Province. Route 8 is closed between the cities of Kontum and Pleiku, and in all of Phuoc Long and Binh Long provinces. In Phu Yen Province, Route 7 is closed. Closed interprovincial routes include Number 1 north of Phuoc Vinh in Phuoc Long Province; and numbers 15 in Bien Hoa, 4 in Long An, and 10 in Hau Nghia provinces. The national railroad is operating between Saigon and Xuan Loc, Long Khanh Province; between Muong Man, Binh Thuan Province, and Ninh Hoa, Khanh Hoa Province; between Dalat, Tuyen Duc Province, and Phan Rang, Ninh Thuan Province; and between Da Nang, Quang Nam Province, and Dong Ha, Quang Tri Province.

C. RURAL CONSTRUCTION

1. Secretary of Rural Construction General Nguyen Duc Thang has expressed the view that the various cadre organizations working in the pacification and rural construction effort--such as the Rural Construction Cadre (New Life Hamlet Cadre), Rural Political Cadre, and the Mobile Administrative Cadre--must be merged into a single new rural construction cadre organization. Thang feels that the new organization must have uniform pay scales and added benefits based on ability, performance, and seniority rather than on educational attainment as at present. He also advocates draft exemption for personnel serving in the pacification effort. Although members of the new cadre would not be uniformed, they would carry arms for defensive purposes. The envisaged new cadre organization might include People's Action Team elements but would not have information or technical personnel.

2. Thang feels that the New Life Hamlet must continue to be the basis of the pacification effort, but that genuine new opportunities must be offered to attract the people. Planning for the revitalized pacification program not only must be realistic, but must also be a responsibility of division tactical area commanders, who can provide the needed troop shield. Moreover, there is complete agreement among province chiefs that troops assigned to pacification duties should not be pulled out for other missions. Thang visualizes the role of US and Allied troops as being confined to seeking out and destroying enemy units and not extending to the pacification or rural construction effort.

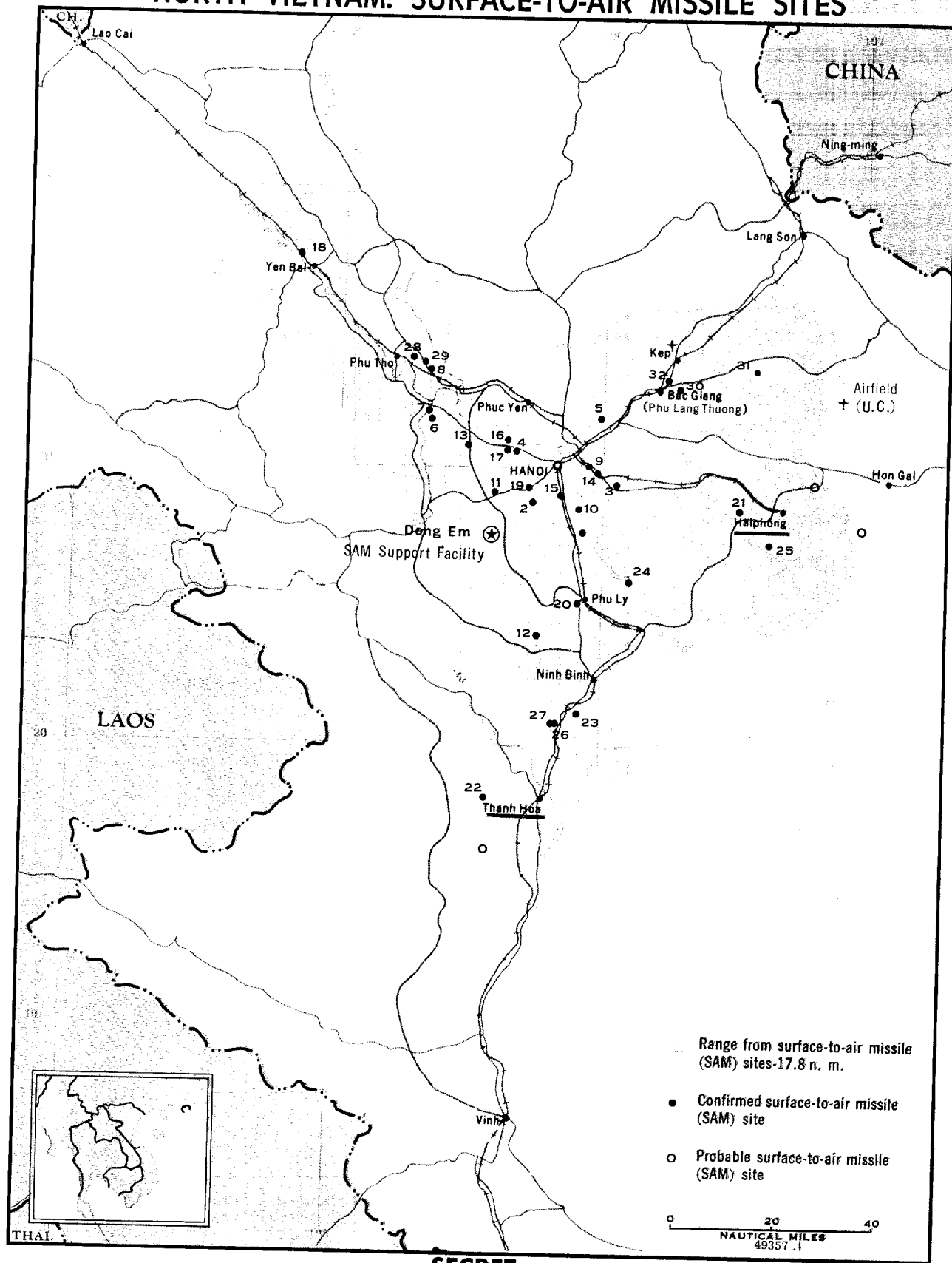
3. Progress is evidently being made in the re-training of Chieu Hoi returnees. Another returnee indoctrination course, the tenth under the Quy Chanh (returnee) program, was started last week at the National Chieu Hoi Center in Saigon with 64 returnees in attendance. In the past, returnees have been selected for this schooling because of their special potential value to the GVN in the propaganda field, or because of their previous position within Viet Cong ranks.

4. The Australian Embassy recently has contacted USOM, on an informal basis, with an offer of assistance to the Chieu Hoi program in the form of either personnel, funds, or commodities.

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5. The number of Chieu Hoi returnees for the past week was 934, compared to 651 the previous week. The gain was mainly in the number of civilian returnees, 554, as contrasted with the previous week's 290. The remainder of the returnees included 283 military, 90 political cadres, and seven draft dodgers. Totals in these categories for the previous week were, respectively, 293, 64, and four.

NORTH VIETNAM: SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE SITES



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II. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BLOC

1. Three new surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites have been discovered in aerial photography during the past week, bringing the total of confirmed SAM sites in the DRV to 32. In addition, what is believed to be an SA-2 support facility has been identified approximately 23 nautical miles southwest of Hanoi. One of the three newly identified SAM sites, containing what is believed to have been a complete missile battalion, was struck by US fighter bombers soon after initial identification. Returning strike aircraft reported that the attack was successful, and that the site and its SA-2 system had been seriously damaged or destroyed. US strike pilots continued to report missile firings at widely separated areas of North Vietnam. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The North Vietnamese, although continuing to construct new SAM sites beyond their known capability for simultaneous occupancy, still have not increased the number of sites, four or five, that have been noted operational at any one time.

2. The high-level Hungarian party delegation led by politburo member Jeno Fock, which has been visiting North Vietnam since 7 October, concluded its stay on the 15th with the signing of a joint communique with officials of the North Vietnamese regime. The communique contained no hint on details of the discussions carried on by the Hungarians with a Hanoi delegation led by party First Secretary Le Duan. Rather, the joint statement contained a routine attack on US "aggression" in Vietnam and a pledge of "full support" from the Hungarians for the DRV's four-point proposal for settling the war, calling this the "basis for the most correct solution." In addition, the communique declared Hungary's intent to further "actively support" socialist construction and the defense of North Vietnam. No mention was made of additional assistance in the fields of telecommunications or electronic equipment, for which Hanoi partially relies upon the Hungarians.

3. The Vietnamese News Agency announced on 13 October that North Vietnam had "postponed to a more suitable date" the fall meeting of its national assembly. The assembly is, constitutionally, the legislative body of the country, but it is used largely as a transmission medium for the dissemination of party leadership

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decisions. It consists of 366 delegates who represent geographical subdivisions of the country, and it normally meets semi-annually. Between sessions, however, assembly functions are carried out by a relatively small standing committee. This committee's decision to postpone the meeting of the larger body was based on "the need to strengthen the fight against American aggression" according to the announcement, but is probably a reflection of DRV transportation problems caused by US air-strikes. In addition, the committee announced several cabinet changes, the most significant of which appeared to be in the field of labor allocation and management--again an area in which bomb damage has created problems.

4. North Vietnamese propaganda exulted over the Vietnam protest demonstrations that took place throughout the US in response to the Vietnam Day Committee's call for international days of protest from 15 to 17 October. Hanoi editorials on 16 October and again on the 20th praised the identity of interest between the free world groups in opposition to US policy and the Vietnamese people's action in resisting the US in Vietnam. The editorials cited the protests in the US as examples of the "weakening" of the US position in Vietnam.

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III. THIRD COUNTRY DEVELOPMENTS

A. CAMBODIA

On 16 October Cambodia publicly denounced the United States and South Vietnam for the aerial bombing and strafing on 15 October of a Cambodian border village in the Stung Treng vicinity, claiming that seven Cambodians were killed and six wounded. Saigon confirmed that a mission, intended against Viet Cong elements in a Vietnamese village two kilometers from the Cambodian border, did strike into Cambodia due to errors in navigation and identification resulting from bad weather, poor light, and flooding in the area.

B. ICRC

Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Saigon complained to the US Embassy that the GVN would not permit them to make unescorted visits to Viet Cong prisoner-of-war camps, and that the minister of interior had declined to provide lists of prisoners on the grounds of security. Embassy officials outlined the GVN position on prisoners of war and, by citing a number of recent specific measures enacted by both Vietnamese and US forces, seem to have had some success in impressing the ICRC delegates that the GVN is attempting to implement the Geneva conventions on prisoners of war while Hanoi and the Viet Cong have openly rejected any compliance.

C. GVN REITERATES PEACE CONDITIONS

At a press conference on 13 October, Nguyen Duy Lien, South Vietnam's observer at the United Nations, reiterated the GVN's four conditions for settlement of the conflict. In commenting on the GVN and US positions on settlement, Lien stated that "the difference is that the United States is disposed to enter negotiations without prior conditions while we, on our part, think some conditions are necessary."

D. DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Foreign Minister Tran Van Do informed the US Embassy in Saigon that he will probably assign Foreign Ministry Secretary General Phan Van Thinh to be chief of a perma-

nent mission in Geneva in order to achieve better contact with the international organizations meeting there.

E. FREE WORLD ASSISTANCE

1. REPUBLIC OF CHINA. The GRC will present a 10,000-kw power transformer to South Vietnam. The \$87,000 transformer was manufactured and donated by a private electrical apparatus plant and turned over to the GRC on 16 October. In the meantime, GVN and GRC representatives met in Taipei for the third Sino-Vietnamese Economic Cooperation Conference, which began on 4 October. [REDACTED] 25X1C
four major topics are expected to be discussed: (a) GRC aid to establish three "improved villages" of about 300 hectares each, designed to aid the farmer in various ways and enlist his support of the GVN; (b) an expected GVN request for technical assistance in telecommunications and postal administration; (c) expansion of the GRC power team in Vietnam from nine to 16 members; and (d) GRC interest in increasing its exports to Vietnam from all sources of financing, and proposals to reduce tariffs on items the GRC exports to Vietnam.

2. SPAIN. [REDACTED] 25X1C
told by a Spanish Embassy officer that Spain would donate four ambulances to South Vietnam. It is not known whether Spain would give additional aid, such as use of a coastal vessel, as reported earlier this month.

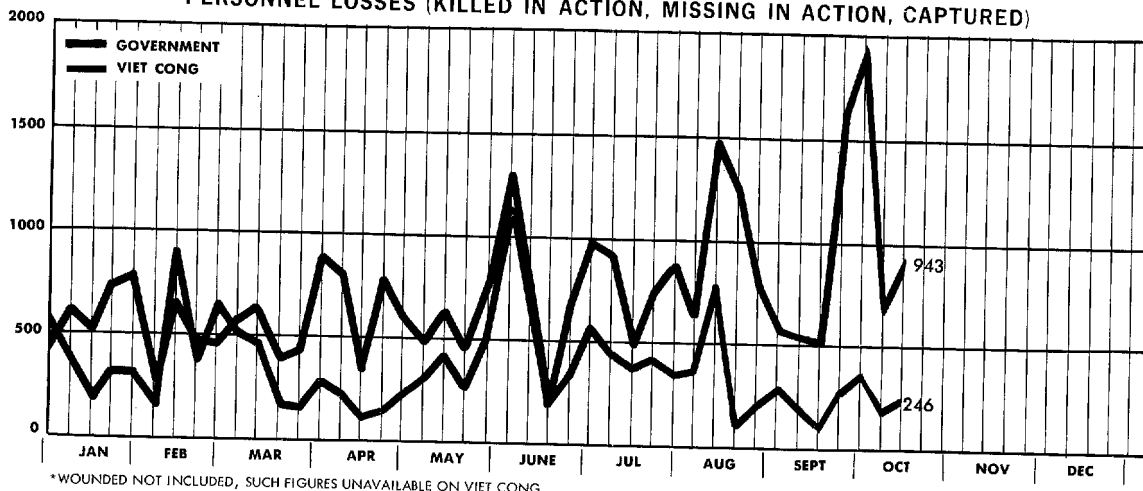
SOUTH VIETNAM BATTLE STATISTICS, 1965

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WEEKLY REPORT

9 Oct - 16 Oct

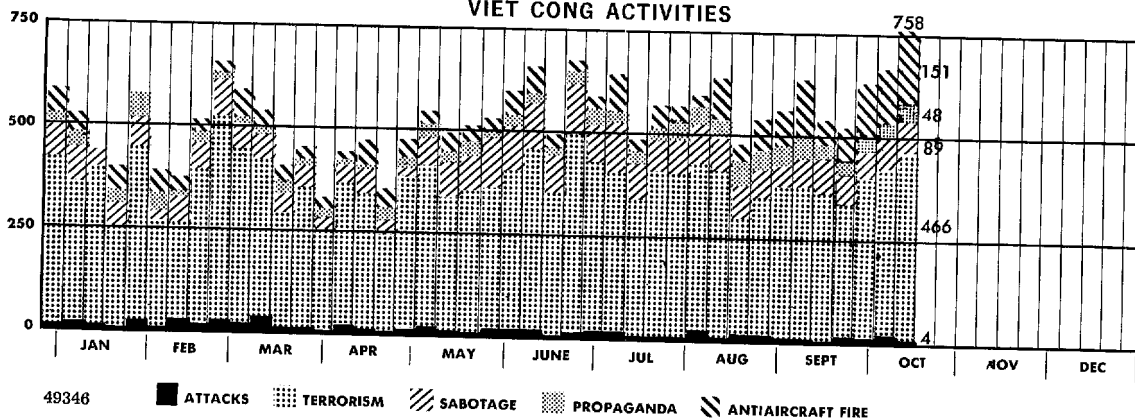
PERSONNEL LOSSES (KILLED IN ACTION, MISSING IN ACTION, CAPTURED)



WEAPONS LOSSES



VIET CONG ACTIVITIES

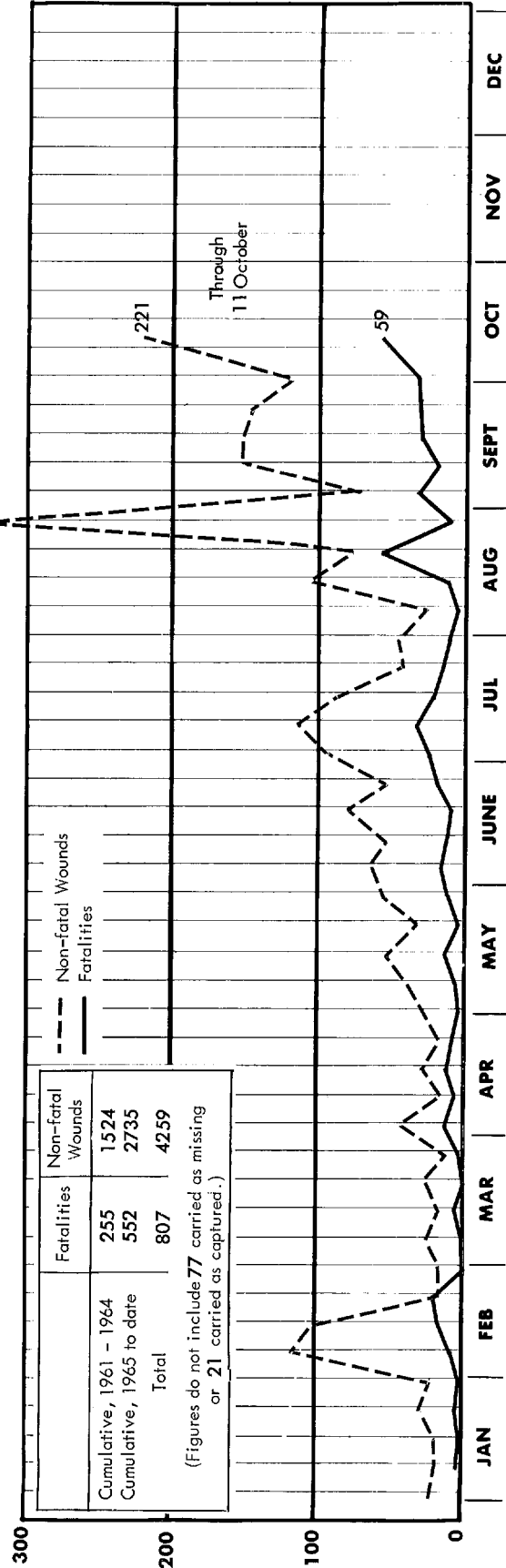


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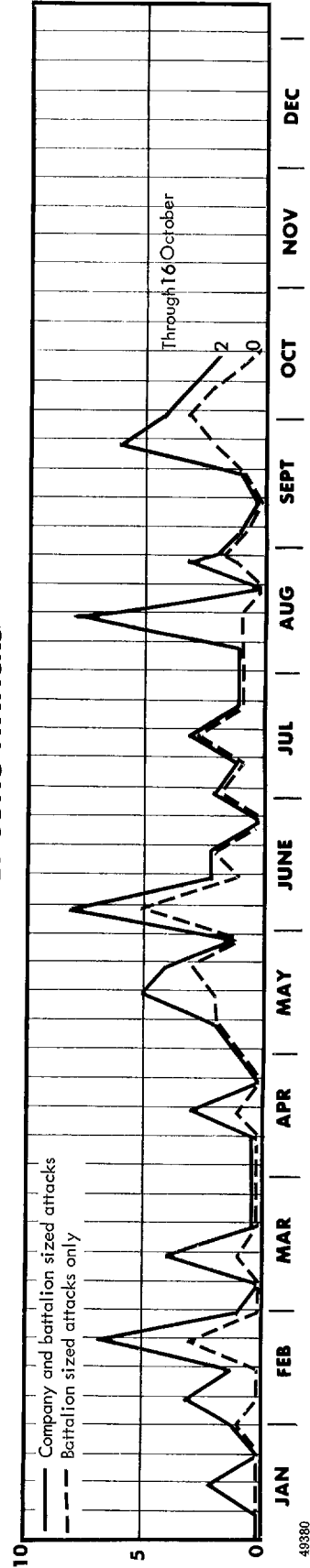
US COMBAT CASUALTIES IN VIETNAM

INCLUDING NORTH VIETNAM

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VIET CONG ATTACKS



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